

Flag Ceremony June 14, 2009

Flag boxes were constructed by post members and Boy Scouts to hold damaged American flags for pickup and burned at ceremony in Dennis Memorial park on Flag Day, June 14. Photo below:



WEST DENNIS — Three flag boxes around Mashpee show Daniel McGuire's handiwork, and now another one will bear his name.

As part of its Flag Day ceremony yesterday at Merrill Park, the Cape Cod American Veterans Post presented a flag retirement box to the family of McGuire, a Marine and former Mashpee resident who was killed last summer in Iraq. The gift commemorates both McGuire's dedication and his service.

Three such boxes, made by McGuire while he was studying to be a Eagle Scout, are now in Mashpee at town hall, the Mashpee Public Library and the post office. The boxes are used to store unserviceable flags before they are disposed of properly during the Flag Day ceremony. The new box will be placed at a Mashpee location to be determined.

"The flag, anything showing the Stars and Stripes, always meant so much to him," Daniel's mother, Kae McGuire, said last night as members of the American Veterans Post cut up the flags and burned them — an annual Flag Day ritual.

"He would always get really upset with somebody who mistreated a flag," she said, choking back tears. "They'll always be treated and disposed of respectfully and properly."

13 boxes distributed

The box, which stands 3 feet tall, is one of 13 to be distributed in McGuire's honor by the veterans post, starting with Dennis, Yarmouth, Harwich and Brewster, according to post Adjutant Richard Riehle.

The red, white and blue boxes were built by members of the American Veterans Post, with lumber donated by local companies, and painted by Boy Scout Troop 80, Riehle said. McGuire's box bears the symbol of the American Veterans Post, an image of the American flag, and his name and military information.

McGuire's father, Mark, accepted the gift last night before about 30 veterans, Boy Scouts and other community members who gathered for the town's annual Flag Day celebration. After presenting the box, the American Veterans Post proceeded to burn about 1,000 unserviceable flags, most of which had been laid at the graves of fallen soldiers.

"Today we are not burning a flag," Sean Mahoney, 13, a member of the Dennis Boy Scout troop, told the crowd, a cloud of smoke circling around him. "We are retiring a symbol of America's honor, courage and strength."

Spirit of Flag Day

Both the ceremony and the gift fall right in with the very spirit of Flag Day, said Thomas Kerr, a Yarmouthport resident whose grandfather William T. Kerr is believed by many to be the founder of Flag Day.

William Kerr first proposed Flag Day after making a speech about the flag in Chicago in 1881 at the age of 13, his grandson said. Six years later, he formed the American Flag Day Association of Western Pennsylvania. He was present in 1949 when then-President Harry Truman signed the holiday into law.

Daniel McGuire, 19 when he died last Aug. 14, would have been proud, his family said.

"It's such an important project," Mark McGuire said of the flag boxes. "There are so many flags, and people don't always know what to do with them. ... This helps people remember how important they are. To everyone."

Amvet Post 333 Dennis, Ma.

Boy Scout Troop 80 Dennis, Ma.